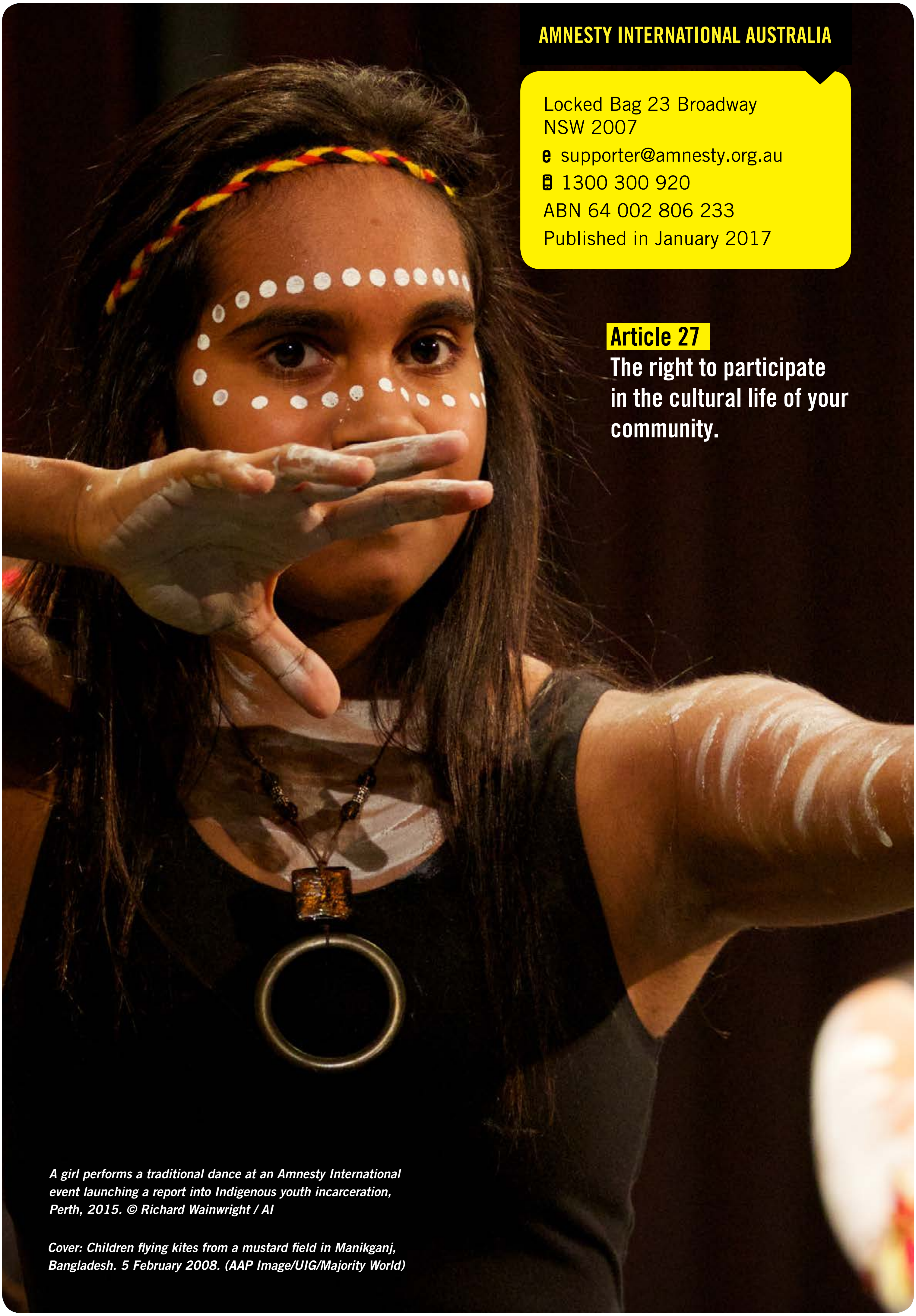
UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS

FREE AND EQUAL



Defending human rights

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



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Article 27

The right to participate in the cultural life of your community.

A girl performs a traditional dance at an Amnesty International event launching a report into Indigenous youth incarceration, Perth, 2015. © Richard Wainwright / AI

Cover: Children flying kites from a mustard field in Manikganj, Bangladesh. 5 February 2008. (AAP Image/UIG/Majority World)

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?



Palestinian children attempt to win the world record for kite-flying, Gaza, July 2011. © UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us.

All human beings are born with equal, inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.

Human rights are based on dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of your nationality, your religion or your beliefs.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life.

These basic human rights are:

Universal: they belong to all of us – everybody in the world.

Inalienable: they cannot be taken away from us.

Indivisible and interdependent: governments should not be able to pick and choose which rights are respected.

What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)?

In 1948, following the traumatic events of World War II, country representatives at the United Nations (UN) banded together to create a list of the rights everyone around the world should enjoy.

Under the guidance of Eleanor Roosevelt, then-first lady of the United States and a politician, diplomat and activist in her own right, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was born.

Article 1 of the UDHR states that: *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

There are 30 articles in the Declaration of Human Rights – 30 rights of everyone on this planet. The articles include the right to asylum, the right to freedom from torture, the right to free speech and the right to education.

Despite the Declaration's international credilbility, the standards outlined in it are sometimes difficult to enforce. That's why it's important for ordinary people to speak out whenever human rights violations happen and to keep governments and others across the world accountable.

Watch the video, 'what are human rights?' at www.amnesty.org.au/what-are-human-rights

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States holding a Declaration of Human Rights poster. November 1949 © UN Photo

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the UDHR on 10 December 1948.

These rights belong to you. They are your rights. Familiarise yourself with them.

Help to promote and defend them for yourself as well as for your fellow human beings.

> "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood"
>
> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

Article 1 Everyone is born free and equal in dignity and with rights.

Article 2 You should never be discriminated against for any reason. Rights belong to all people, whatever our differences.

Article 3 Everyone has the rights to life, liberty and security.

Article 4 No-one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

Article 5 No-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6 You have the right to be treated as a person in the eyes of the law.

Article 7 You have the right to be treated by the law in the same way as everyone else. Everyone has a right to protection against violations of their human rights.

Article 8 If your rights under law are violated, you have the right to see justice done in a court or tribunal.

Article 9 No-one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10 You have the right to a fair and public trial by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Article 11 Everyone is to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a fair trial. No one should be charged with a criminal offence for an act which wasn't an offence at the time the act was done.

Article 12 No-one has the right to intrude in your private life or interfere with your home and family without good reason. No-one has the right to attack your good name without reason.

Article 13 You have the right to freedom of movement within your country. Everyone has the right to leave a country and to return home.

Article 14 You have the right to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries. You may not invoke this right if fleeing just laws in your own country.

Article 15 You have the right to a nationality.

The above Articles are abbreviated. For a full version of the Declaration go to www.un.org/Overview/rights



Moses Akatugba after his release. © HURSDEF

“While before I felt all hope had gone, the story changed when Amnesty International came in. The messages I received overwhelmed me. I regained hope.”

Moses Akatugba

Moses Akatugba in Nigeria was sentenced to death at the age of 16, for allegedly stealing three mobile phones.

Moses was shot in his hand and beaten at the time of his arrest. He says that police officers tortured him until he signed two “confessional” statements already written by the police.

After 10 years in prison and over 800,000 messages from activists around the world, the Governor of Delta State in Nigeria responded to pressure from Amnesty supporters and granted a full pardon to Moses.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 16 You have the right to marry and to raise a family. Men and women have the same rights when they are married and when they are separated.

Article 17 You have the right to own property and it cannot randomly be taken away from you.

Article 18 You have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to peacefully express those beliefs in teaching, practice and worship.

Article 19 You have the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Article 20 You have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Article 21 You have the right to take part in the government of your country.

Article 22 As a member of society, you have a right to social security.

Article 23 You have the right to work, to good working conditions, to equal pay for equal work and to form and join unions.

Article 24 You have the right to rest and leisure.

Article 25 You have the right to a decent life, including enough food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services.

Article 26 You have the right to an education.

Article 27 No-one may stop you from participating in the cultural life of your community.

Article 28 You have the right to live in the kind of world where your rights and freedoms are respected.

Article 29 We all have a responsibility to the people around us and should protect their rights and freedoms.

Article 30 There is nothing in this declaration that justifies any person or country taking away the rights to which we are all entitled.



Displaced children residing at a United Nations transit site in Juba, South Sudan at play. 12 August 2016. © UN Photo/Isaac Billy

> "You have the right to be treated by the law in the same way as everyone else. Everyone has a right to protection against violations of their human rights."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 7

The above Articles are abbreviated. For a full version of the Declaration go to www.un.org/Overview/rights



Article 20:
You have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Burmese student activist Phyoe Phyoe Aung at court hearings in Myanmar, May 2015. © Private

> “I thank everyone very much for their support for me and our movement. Receiving letters gives me real inspiration for what we are doing. I have begun to notice that the world is watching and cheering us – we are not alone.”
>
> Phyoe Phyoe Aung

In 2015, student leader Phyoe Phyoe Aung was jailed for helping organise peaceful protests against the government in Myanmar.

For this she was charged with a range of offences, including inciting the public to commit offences against the State, and faced up to nine years' imprisonment.

After almost 400,000 Amnesty supporters called for her release, Phyoe Phyoe Aung walked free in April 2016.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The UDHR applies equally to everyone.

To further protect the rights of the world's most vulnerable people the UN has adopted several other human rights agreements. When countries sign up to these agreements, it means their governments commit to protecting these rights in their countries.



People plant a 'Sea of Hands' to celebrate NAIDOC Week, Sydney, June 2016. © Jacquie Manning / ANTaR

The rights of Indigenous people

The International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP) outlines the unique rights of Indigenous Peoples and sets a standard for the protection of these rights.

The UN adopted the Declaration on 13 September 2007, after more than 20 years of discussion.

Outlined in the DRIP include Indigenous Peoples' rights to:
- be free from discrimination
- their cultural identity
- self-determination (the right to decide on matters that affect your own life, land or livelihood)
- free, prior and informed consent (the right to be consulted and given all the information necessary to make decisions that may impact your life or land)

Download a simplified version of the Declaration with commentary from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at: www.amnesty.org.au/DRIP



A woman and child at a refugee camp in Sindos, Greece, July 2016. © Richard Burton / AI

The rights of refugees and asylum seekers

By the end of 2015, 65.3 million people worldwide had been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict, persecution, violence and human rights violations.

Of these:
- 21.3 million people had to escape to another country. These people are referred to as refugees.
- 3.2 million people have sought safety in another country. These are people seeking asylum and are awaiting recognition as refugees.
- 40.8 million people were displaced within their own country. These people are described as internally displaced persons.

When people are forced to flee their countries, the international community must step in to provide refugees with the protection and rights due to them. This is outlined in Article 14 of the UDHR.

Further, the 1951 Refugee Convention outlines who is a refugee and the kind of legal protection, assistance and social rights a refugee is entitled to. Australia has signed up to abide by the Refugee Convention.

Read more at www.amnesty.org.au/refugees

> "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution"
>
> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



A gay pride parade in Istanbul, Turkey, June 2008. © AI

LGBTQI rights

All people have the same human rights regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or because they are intersex. That includes the right to be free from discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation.

The right of adults to enter into consensual marriage is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 16).

No-one should be denied the right to marry the person they love because of their gender or sexuality.

> “You have the right to marry and to raise a family. Men and women have the same rights when they are married and when they are separated.”
>
> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16



Afghan children juggle as they mark World Peace Day in Herat, Afghanistan, 22 September 2016. © EPA/JALIL REZAYEE

Children’s rights

Children and young people (anyone below the age of 18) have further rights in recognition of their need to develop to their full potential, and to protect them from exploitation and abuse. ***The rights of children are outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.***



A woman who endured forced sterilisation demands justice in Lima, Peru, August 2016. © AI Peru

Women’s rights

Despite some gains, most women and girls are far from enjoying equal rights and face widespread, often institutionalised discrimination and violence. Many women and girls around the world are married against their will, trapped in conflicts where rape is used as a strategy, blocked from fair wages, education and political participation.

Millions of women cannot choose freely what happens to their body. For example, in some countries abortion is a crime in all circumstances, even for survivors of rape and incest, or when a woman’s life is at risk.

This is not an exhaustive list; anyone can be at risk of having their rights taken away.



Amnesty activists protest Australia's offshore detention of people seeking asylum. Ottawa, Canada, November 2016. © AI

What is Amnesty International?

Amnesty International is the world's largest and most-respected human rights organisation. In Australia and across the globe we bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws and free people jailed for voicing their opinions.

We send researchers into countries where human rights abuses are occurring to investigate and report. We then use this evidence to call on governments or companies to uphold, create or change laws or policies that will protect human rights.

Amnesty's vital work is funded by people just like you. We're independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion to ensure we can speak out on human rights abuses wherever they occur.

People power

Amnesty is a grassroots movement: ordinary people from all walks of life, standing together for justice, freedom, human dignity and equality.

Around the world we stand with people and communities who come under attack, encourage governments and others to respect human rights and raise awareness of the international standards that protect us all.

Our 7 million supporters worldwide sign petitions, write letters, partake in peaceful protests and take online actions directed at governments, groups or individuals. And we also support human rights advocates and activists defending human rights in their own countries.

Together our movement:

- defends freedom of expression and association
- demands safety for people fleeing war and persecution
- works to protect and defend women's rights
- campaigns for the abolition of the death penalty everywhere
- works for and with Indigenous people to secure equality
- demands justice for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes
- defends the rights of the LGBTQI community

- The world's **largest** human rights organisation.
- A global movement of **7 million supporters** in more than 150 countries.
- Over **500,000 supporters in Australia** working to defend human rights.
- Nobel **Peace Prize winner** 1977.

Watch a video about how Amnesty works at www.amnesty.org.au/the-movement



EuroPride event in Riga, Latvia, June 2015. © AI

Human rights are being violated all the time and right now thousands of people are being denied a fair trial, tortured and imprisoned because of what they think or believe.

The UDHR is the bedrock of our campaigning for these people – allowing us to hold authorities to account when rights are abused.

Our members take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and offline campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilise public pressure and show international solidarity. And together, we make a difference.

Join Amnesty and act on behalf of people whose human rights are being abused.

Your support can change lives.

Register your interest in volunteering:
www.amnesty.org.au/donate-my-time

Become a member:
www.amnesty.org.au/sign-up

Donate:
www.amnesty.org.au/give-once

Find a local group or event:
www.amnesty.org.au/find-my-group

Sign an online petition: www.amnesty.org.au/add-my-voice



Article 29:
We all have a responsibility to the people around us and should protect their rights and freedoms.

Solidarity action for Egyptian human rights activists. Berlin, Germany, January 2014. © AI / Henning Schacht

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